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MOTHERLOVE

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MODERN AUTHORS' SERIES

MOTHERLOVE

(MODERSKÄRLEK)

An Act

BY

AUGUST STRINDBERG

Author of "The Creditor," "Swanwhite," "Fröken Julie," etc.

English Version

BY

FRANCIS J. ZIEGLER

PHILADELPHIA

BROWN BROTHERS

1910

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MOTHERLOVE

(MODERSKÄRLEK)

An Act, by AUGUST STRINDBERG

English Version by FRANCIS J. ZIEGLER

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CHARACTERS.

The Mother, formerly a loose woman, forty-two years.
The Daughter, actress, twenty years.
Lizzie, eighteen years.
Wardrobe Mistress of the theatre.

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MOTHERLOVE.

SCENE.

The interior of a fisherman's cottage at a seaside resort. In the background a veranda opening upon the beach.

(*The Mother and the Wardrobe Mistress smoking cigars, drinking porter and playing cards. The Daughter stands looking intently out the window.*)

THE MOTHER.

Come, Helen, and make the third hand!

THE DAUGHTER.

Can't I leave card playing alone for once on such a beautiful summer day!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

Always be civil to your mama!

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THE MOTHER.

Don't sit out there on the veranda and get sunburnt!

THE DAUGHTER.

It doesn't burn here!

THE MOTHER.

Then pull down the blind! (*To the Wardrobe Mistress.*) You must shuffle. Be so good.

THE DAUGHTER.

Can't I go bathing with the girls to-day?

THE MOTHER.

Not without your mama, you know that!

THE DAUGHTER.

But the girls know how to swim, and mama does not!

THE MOTHER.

The question is not who knows how to swim and who doesn't, but Helen knows that she never goes out without her mama.

THE DAUGHTER.

As if I didn't know that! I have heard it ever since I could understand what you said!

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THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

That shows that Helen has had a loving mother who wanted the best for her child!

THE MOTHER.

(*Reaches her hand to the Wardrobe Mistress.*)

Thanks! Thanks for those words, Augusta! What I was once, that —— but that I have been a tender mother I can say myself with confidence.

THE DAUGHTER.

It is not worth while, then, asking you if I can go down and play lawn tennis!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

One must not be disrespectful to one's mother, young lady, and when one doesn't want to please one's associates by taking part in their simple amusements it seems, to speak frankly, indelicate to come and ask to be allowed to amuse oneself in other company!

THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, yes, yes, I know all that; I know, I know!

THE MOTHER.

Are you disagreeable again! Find something useful

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to do and don't sit there so idle! A grown up young lady!

THE DAUGHTER.

If I am a grown up young lady, why do you treat me like a child?

THE MOTHER.

Because you behave like a child!

THE DAUGHTER.

You, at least, should not reproach me, you want me that way!

THE MOTHER.

See here, Helen, I notice you have grown snappier than usual recently—— With whom do you associate here?

THE DAUGHTER.

With you among others!

THE MOTHER.

You begin to have secrets from your mother!

THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, it's time I did!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

Shame on you, young lady, do you want to squabble with your mother!

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THE MOTHER.

We ought to be doing something useful instead of quarreling. For example, come and read me your part.

THE DAUGHTER.

The manager said I was to read it over to nobody, I would only be taught wrong.

THE MOTHER.

That is the thanks one gets for trying to help! And everything I do is foolish, that goes without saying!

THE DAUGHTER.

Why do you do it then, and why should I take the blame when you do things the wrong way!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

You want to reproach your mother for her lack of education! Pooh, how simple!

THE DAUGHTER.

You say that I want to, Aunt, but I don't do so! But when my mother wants to teach me anything the wrong way I must tell her, unless my engagement is to come to an end and we find ourselves down on our uppers!

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THE MOTHER.

And so we have to hear, also, that we live off you! But do you know how much you owe to Aunt Augusta here? Do you know that it was she who took both of us in when your bad father deserted us; that she cared for us, and that you owe her a debt which you can never repay! Do you know that?

(*The Daughter is silent.*)

THE MOTHER.

Do you know that? Answer!

THE DAUGHTER.

I won't answer that!

THE MOTHER.

Won't you answer!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

Calm yourself, Amelia! The neighbors will hear us and there will be scandal again. So quiet yourself!

THE MOTHER.

(*To the Daughter.*)

Go get dressed and come walking with us!

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THE DAUGHTER.

I will not go walking to-day!

THE MOTHER.

This is the third day that you have refused to go walking with your mother! (*Thoughtfully.*) Can it be possible?——Go out on the veranda, Helen, I want to talk to Aunt Augusta.

(*The Daughter goes out to the veranda.*)

THE MOTHER.

Do you believe it is possible?

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

What?

THE MOTHER.

That she has heard anything?

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

That is not possible!

THE MOTHER.

Anything can happen! Not that I believe anyone could be so cruel as to tell the child to her face. I had a nephew who was thirty-six before he heard that his

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father was a suicide——But there is something back of Helen's changed disposition. Eight days ago I noticed that she fretted at my company on the promenade. She wanted to go by herself; she was nervous, unable to speak a word and wanted to come home! That means something!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

She objected—if I understand you correctly—to the company of her own mother?

THE MOTHER.

Yes!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

No, that is going too far!

THE MOTHER.

And, what is worse, can you imagine, she neglected to introduce me when we met some of her acquaintances coming off the steamboat!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

Do you know what I think?——She has met somebody who came here during the last eight days.——We will go down to the post office and look over the newcomers.

THE MOTHER.

Yes, we will do that!——Helen! Take care of the house for a while, we are going to the post office.

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THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, mama!

THE MOTHER.

(*To the Wardrobe Mistress.*)

It is just as if I had dreamed all this——

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

Yes, dreams come true, sometimes—I know that —but not the beautiful ones.

(*They leave by the right.*)

(*The Daughter beckons. Lizzie enters. She is dressed in lawn tennis costume, all white with a white hat.*)

LIZZIE.

Have they gone?

THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, for a little while.

LIZZIE.

Well, what does your mother say?

THE DAUGHTER.

I did not dare ask her! She is in such a bad humor.

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LIZZIE.

Poor Helen! Then you can't come with me on the outing! And I would have been so happy——If you knew how I loved you! (*Kisses her.*)

THE DAUGHTER.

If you knew what your friendship and the intimacy of these days in your house meant to me, who never associated before with decent people. Think what it must be to me to live in a hole where the air is damp, where people who live a questionable existence move about me, whispering, brawling, quarreling; where I never get a friendly word, much less a caress, and where my soul is kept in custody as if it were a criminal ——Oh, it is my mother of whom I speak, and it hurts, it hurts, it hurts! And you will only despise me!

LIZZIE.

One can't do that who knows what the parents are and——

THE DAUGHTER.

No, but one must suffer it! It is certain that one can live until the day of one's death without learning what kind of people one's parents are with whom one has lived. And I believe, too, that when one hears it one doesn't believe it!

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LIZZIE.

(*Embarrased.*)

Have you heard anything?

THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, when I had been here three days, I heard someone through the partition talking about my mother. Do you know what they said?

LIZZIE.

Don't worry about that——

THE DAUGHTER.

They said that she had been a bad woman!——I didn't want to believe it; I won't believe it yet; but I feel that it is true; everything tends to make it credible ——and it shames me! Shames me to show myself outside with her, believing that people look at us, that the men leer at us——it is frightful! But is it true?

LIZZIE.

People lie so much, and I don't know.

THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, you know, you know something; but you don't

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want to tell me, and I thank you for it, but I am just as unhappy, whether you say anything or not!

LIZZIE.

My dear friend, put these thoughts out of your head and come to us to-day; you will meet people who can do you good. My father came home this morning and is anxious to see you, for you must know that I have mentioned you in my letters to him, and I believe Cousin Gerhard has also.

THE DAUGHTER.

You have a father; so had I when I was very, very little——

LIZZIE.

Where is he now?

THE DAUGHTER.

He left us, because he was a bad man, ~~according to mother~~.

LIZZIE.

One ~~can~~ tell ~~that~~ as little——However,——I'll tell you something; if you come to us to-day you will meet the manager of the big theatre, and it might be you could secure an engagement.

THE DAUGHTER.

~~What did you say~~?

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LIZZIE.

Yes, ~~it is so~~; he is interested in you——that is to say, Gerhard and I have interested him in you; and you know how ~~little~~ something like this may bring good fortune; a personal meeting, a good word spoken at the right time. Now you cannot say ~~no without standing in your own light.~~

THE DAUGHTER.

Dearest, ~~if~~ I want to! You know I do, but I ~~don't~~ can't go out without mama.

LIZZIE.

Why not? Can you give me a reason?

THE DAUGHTER.

I don't know! She taught me to ~~answer~~ say that ~~way~~ when I was a child, ~~and the order stands~~.

LIZZIE.

Has she made you give a promise?

THE DAUGHTER.

No, she didn't need to; she has only to say, "answer so!" And ~~then~~ I do ~~it~~!

LIZZIE.

Do you think it would be wrong to leave her for a couple of hours?

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THE DAUGHTER.

I don't believe she would miss me, because when I am home she is always finding fault with me; but I should be uncomfortable if I went where she could not accompany me.

LIZZIE.

Have you thought of the possibility of her being able to accompany you in this case?

THE DAUGHTER.

No, I have not thought of that!——

LIZZIE.

But should you marry——

THE DAUGHTER.

I shall never marry!

LIZZIE.

Did your mother teach you to say that, too?

THE DAUGHTER.

Possibly!——Yes, she has always warned me against the men!

LIZZIE.

Against a husband?

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THE DAUGHTER.

I presume so!

LIZZIE.

Listen, Helen! You must really emancipate yourself.

THE DAUGHTER.

Fy! I don't want to be an emancipated woman!

LIZZIE.

No, I didn't mean that kind of one, but you must break loose from your dependency, because you are grown up, and because it can make life impossible for you.

THE DAUGHTER.

I don't believe I can do that. Think how close I have been ~~tied~~ to ~~this~~ mother since childhood; not daring to have a thought which was not hers, not a wish which was not her wish. I know it hinders me, that it stands in my way, but I can't do otherwise.

LIZZIE.

And if your mother died you would be helpless.

THE DAUGHTER.

I should have to make my way.

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LIZZIE.

But you have no associates, no friends; and one cannot live alone. You must seek a support! Have you never been in love?

THE DAUGHTER.

I don't know! I have never been given to thinking thought of such matters, and mother prevents young men coming near me! Do you think about such things?

LIZZIE.

I would if anybody cared for me and I wanted him.

THE DAUGHTER.

Then you are going to marry your Cousin Gerhard.

LIZZIE.

I shall never do that, because he doesn't love me!

THE DAUGHTER.

Doesn't he?

LIZZIE.

No! Because he is in love with you.

THE DAUGHTER.

With me?

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LIZZIE.

Yes; and ~~I was charged to ask you~~ he has asked if he might visit you.

THE DAUGHTER.

Here? No, that cannot be! And do you think that I would want to stand in your way? And do you think I could cut you out with him, you who are so beautiful, so fine——(*~~Takes Lizzie's hand in hers.~~*) ~~Such a~~ hand and such a wrist! I saw your feet, ~~dearest~~, ~~when~~ we were in the bathhouse. (*Falls on her ~~knees before~~ Lizzie, who has seated herself.*) Such a foot, with ~~every~~ nail ~~perfect~~, with the toes as plump and rosy as a baby's ~~hand.~~ (*~~Kisses~~ Lizzie's foot.*) You are a noble woman, made out of different stuff than I ~~am~~!

LIZZIE.

Stop that and don't talk nonsense! (*Rises.*) If you knew!——But——

THE DAUGHTER.

And you ~~must be just~~ are as good as you are beautiful; ~~so we think always~~ down here ~~when we see you up there~~ with that clear, soft countenance, in which need has not marked its fear, nor envy engraved its ugly lines.

LIZZIE.

Listen, Helen, I might believe you were in love with me——

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THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, I am, too! I try to resemble you somewhat, as the hepatica resembles the anemone, and then I see in you my better self, something that I might be, but ~~never can~~. You came as gently, ~~as white~~, as an angel in ~~my way~~ those recent summer days; now it is autumn, and the day after to-morrow we go back to the city. Then we shall know each other no more——And we dare not know each other——You can not lift me up, but I could pull you down, and I don't want to do that! I want you to be so much above me, so far away, that I cannot see your faults. Therefore, farewell, Lizzie, my first and only friend. (Stop)

LIZZIE.

No, that is enough!——Helen! Do you know who I am!——I am your sister!

THE DAUGHTER.

You?——How is that?

LIZZIE.

You and I have the same father!

THE DAUGHTER.

And you are my sister, my dear little sister.—— But what is my father? He must be a naval com-

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mander, because your father is; how stupid I am! But he is married then, because——Is he good to you? He wasn't to my mother.

LIZZIE.

You don't know ~~that~~!——But aren't you happy now to have found a little sister—~~and one that~~ doesn't cry?

THE DAUGHTER.

Oh, yes, I am so happy that I don't know what to say——(*~~Embraces her.~~*) But I dare not be entirely happy, because I don't know what is going to happen now! What will mama say, ~~and how will it be when we meet~~ papa?

LIZZIE.

Leave your mother to me; ~~she cannot~~ stay ~~away much longer.~~ And keep in the background until you are needed. ~~Come and give~~ me a kiss ~~first, little~~ one! (*~~They kiss each other.~~*)

THE DAUGHTER.

My sister! How wonderful that word sounds, as wonderful as the word "father" when one has not pronounced it before——

LIZZIE.

~~Don't let us talk at random, but let us stick to the subject.~~——Do you believe that your mother will say

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no now to the invitation to visit us? To visit your sister and your father?

THE DAUGHTER.

Without mama?——Oh, she hates your—my father so frightfully!

LIZZIE.

But suppose she has no occasion for it?——If you only knew how full the world is of lies and deceptions! And errors and misunderstandings. My father has told me of a comrade he had when he first went to sea as a cadet. A gold watch was stolen from the officers' cabin, and, for some reason, heaven knows what, the cadet was suspected. His comrades drew away from him and that embittered him so that he found his surroundings unbearable, became mixed up in a fight and was forced to resign. Two years later the thief was discovered, he was a boatswain, but no amends could be made the innocent man, who had only been suspected. And that lasted all his life, although the suspicion had been disproved, and the opprobrious nickname he had received hung to him. It had been built up like a house, the bad character had been so constructed and riveted that even after the false foundations had been taken away the structure remained, swinging in the air like the castle in the Arabian Nights. You see, that is the way of the world! But it can be even worse than that, as it was in the case of the instrument maker at Arboga, who was called an incendiary, because somebody set fire to his shop, or An-

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dersson, who was called Thief Andersson, because he was the victim of a well-known rogue.

THE DAUGHTER.

By all this you mean that my father was not what I believed him?

LIZZIE.

That's just what I mean!

THE DAUGHTER.

I-have seen him in my dreams, since I lost the recollection of him——Is he not of middle height, with a dark beard and great, blue seaman's eyes?

LIZZIE.

Yes, that's near it!

THE DAUGHTER.

And then——Wait, now, I think of something——Do you see this watch. In the case is a little compass ——and in the compass is an eye which marks the north!——Who gave me this?

LIZZIE.

Your father! I saw him buy it!

THE DAUGHTER.

Then I have seen him in the theatre so many times when I was acting——He sat always in the left proscenium box and followed me about with his opera glasses——I did not dare speak to mother about it, because she was always so angry with me——and once he threw me flowers—but mama burned them.——~~Do you think it was he~~?

LIZZIE.

It was he, and you can assure yourself that his eyes have followed you all these years, ~~as the eye has watched the needle on the compass~~.

THE DAUGHTER.

And you say that I shall see him, that he wants to meet me! It is like a fairy tale——

LIZZIE.

~~The fairy~~ tale is ended! I hear your mother coming——~~Back with you, I must meet the fire first.~~

THE DAUGHTER.

Something awful is going to happen, I feel it! ~~Why cannot people be in accord and be at peace with~~ each ~~other~~! Oh, ~~that it were over~~! If mama will only be good——~~I will go outside and pray to God to make her~~

amiable.——But he can't do that, or he won't do it, I don't know ~~why~~!

LIZZIE.

He can and will do it, if you can only have faith; believe a little in good fortune and in your own power.

THE DAUGHTER.

Power? For what? To be unfeeling? I cannot be! And the happiness which is bought with the tears of another cannot endure.

LIZZIE.

Indeed!——Make way!

THE DAUGHTER.

How can you believe that this will end well!

LIZZIE.

Keep still!

(*Enter the Mother.*)

LIZZIE.

Madame——

THE MOTHER.

Miss, if you please——

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LIZZIE.

Your daughter —

THE MOTHER.

Yes, I have a daughter, even if I am only a Miss, and many have the same, and I am not ashamed of it. ——What's this all about?

LIZZIE.

My errand was simply to ask you if Miss Helen could take part in an outing arranged by some of the visitors here.

THE MOTHER.

Didn't Helen answer that herself?

LIZZIE.

Yes, she told me I should come to you!

THE MOTHER.

That was not the right answer.—Helen, my child, do you want to accept an invitation without your mother?

THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, if you will allow me.

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THE MOTHER.

Allow you? What control have I over such a big girl? You shall answer the lady as you like, if you want to leave your mother sitting alone at home with her shame while you go and amuse yourself; if you want people to ask you about your mama, so that you will have to answer, she has not been invited, and so forth, and so forth. Now say what you want yourself.

LIZZIE.

~~Do not let us stick at trifles~~. I know very well how Helen stands in this matter, and I know, too, your method of making her answer as you will. If you really care for your daughter as much as you pretend, you ought to want what is best for her, even when it is unpleasant for you.

THE MOTHER.

Listen, my child; I know your name and who you are, even if I have not had the honor of an introduction, but I should like to know if your youth can teach my age anything.

LIZZIE.

Who knows? Since mother died, six long years ago, my time has been occupied in bringing up my brothers and sisters, and I have made the discovery that there are people who never learn anything from life, no matter how long they live.

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THE MOTHER.

What do you mean by that?

LIZZIE.

I mean to say, here is an opportunity for your daughter to come out in life, possibly to display her talent to better advantage, possibly to become engaged to a young man of good social position——

THE MOTHER.

That sounds well, but what do you want to do with me?

LIZZIE.

We are not talking about you, but about your daughter! Can't you think for a moment about her without thinking about yourself?

THE MOTHER.

Yes, but you see, when I think about myself, I think about my daughter too, because she has learned to love her mother——

LIZZIE.

I don't believe that! She has honored you, because you have separated her from all others, and she must depend upon someone, since you parted her from her father.

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THE MOTHER.

What's that you say?

LIZZIE.

That you separated the child from its father, because he declined to marry you after you had been untrue to him. Therefore, you hindered him from seeing his child, and revenged your downfall upon him and upon your child!

THE MOTHER.

Helen, don't believe a word of what she says!—— That I should live to see the day when a stranger can come into my own house and abuse me in the presence of my child!

THE DAUGHTER.

(*Coming forward.*)

You dare not say anything bad of my mother——

LIZZIE.

I must, if I am to say anything good of my father—— Nevertheless, I see that this conversation is nearing the end——Allow me, therefore, to give you one or two pieces of good advice: Put that bawd, who goes by the name of Aunt Augusta, out of your house, if you do not want to ruin your daughter's career totally. That is number one! Put in order all the receipts for

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the money you received from my father for Helen's education, as you will soon have to make an accounting! That is number two! Then an extra number——Stop following your daughter with your companions on the street, or she will lose her present engagement; and then you will sell your daughter's favors, as you sought formerly to buy back your lost reputation, at the expense of your child's future.

(*The Mother is crushed.*)

THE DAUGHTER.

(*To Lizzie.*)

Leave this house. ~~Nothing is sacred to you, not even motherlove~~!

LIZZIE.

Such a holy one! Just as when children spit on each other when playing and then say "pax," then they are holy ~~too~~!

THE DAUGHTER.

It seems to me now as if you only came here to disturb us, certainly not to right matters——

LIZZIE.

Yes, I came here to right matters——for my father, who was innocent, ~~just as~~ the incendiary was, you remember, who had fire set to his place. I came to right

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you, who have been the victim of a woman, and who can only be righted by her withdrawing to a place where nobody will disturb her and where she will disturb nobody. That was my mission; now I have set things right. Farewell!

THE MOTHER.

Do not go, Miss, before I have said one more word! You came here—leaving the other nonsense out of the question—to invite Helen to visit you.

LIZZIE.

Yes, so she might meet the manager of the big theatre, who is interested in her.

THE MOTHER.

What! The manager! And you said nothing about that! Of course Helen can go—alone! Yes, without me!

(*Gesture by the Daughter.*)

LIZZIE.

Now you are human! Helen you may come! Do you hear?

THE DAUGHTER.

Yes, but now I don't want to!

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THE MOTHER.

You're joking!

THE DAUGHTER.

No, I would be out of place; I don't want to mingle with people who despise my mother.

THE MOTHER.

What kind of talk's that! Do you want to stand in your own light? Be good enough to go and get dressed, that you may be presentable!

THE DAUGHTER.

No, I cannot, I cannot go away from you, mother. Now that I know all, I shall never be able to have a happy hour again——never be able to believe in anything——

LIZZIE.

(*To the Mother.*)

Now you are reaping what you have sown——and if some day a man comes and gives your daughter a home, you will sit lonesome in your old age and have time to rue your stupidity. Good-by! (*Goes and kisses Helen on the brow.*) Good-by, sister!

THE DAUGHTER.

Good-by!

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LIZZIE.

Look me in the eyes and seem as if you had some hope in life!

THE DAUGHTER.

I can't do that! I can't thank you for your good intentions, for you have done me more harm than you know. You waked me with a snake as I lay slumbering in the wood in the sunshine——

LIZZIE.

Go to sleep again and I shall wake you with flowers and songs! Good-night! Sleep well! (*Goes.*)

THE MOTHER.

An angel of light in white garments! She was a devil! A real devil! And you! And how foolish you were! What a childish girl! To have fine feelings when mankind is so coarse!

THE DAUGHTER.

Oh, that you could be so untruthful to me; that I could be deceived into reviling my father!

THE MOTHER.

Oh, what is the use of discussing last year's snows.

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THE DAUGHTER.

And beside——Aunt Augusta!

THE MOTHER.

Silence! Aunt Augusta is a fine woman, to whom you owe a great debt——

THE DAUGHTER.

That is not true either——It was my father who paid for my education——

THE MOTHER.

Yes, but I had to live, too——You are so childish! And you are vindictive, also! Can't you forget a little deception——(*Enter the Wardrobe Mistress.*) See, here comes Augusta! Come, now we little people will amuse ourselves as best we can.

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

Yes, it was he! You see I didn't advise you so badly.

THE MOTHER.

We will not bother ourselves about that miserable man——

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THE DAUGHTER.

Don't talk that way, mother, it isn't true!

THE WARDROBE MISTRESS.

What isn't true?

THE DAUGHTER.

Come, let's play cards! I cannot break down the wall it took so many years to build!——Come!
(*She sits down and begins to shuffle the deck.*)

THE MOTHER.

See, now at last you are a sensible girl!

(CURTAIN.)

UNIV. OF MICHIGAN.
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